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**NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE ARMED FORCES LIAISON GROUP ACTION PLAN**

**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT – 2022 / 2023**

***Introduction***

This report highlights the key progress made during 2022/23 against the themed actions outlined in the North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Strategy and Action Plan.

This report follows on from the first annual report, published in September 2022, against the live action plan and records the achievements against the Action Plan.

***Cross-cutting Factors***

* North East Lincolnshire Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant on 6th June 2023. The first time the authority has signed the covenant in its own right and enhances the original Community Covenant signed in November 2011.
* North East Lincolnshire Council has successfully implemented the new Covenant Duty contained in the Armed Forces Act 2021. This also includes the MOD harmonization process to ensure that statistics and data are more compatible, consistent and coherent.
* North East Lincolnshire Council has received, and shared, the information from the 2021 Census in relation to our Armed Forces Community population.
* The North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Liaison Group has continued to expand its membership across North East Lincolnshire and now includes:
  + AFVBC – The Wheatsheaf, Grimsby
  + Phillips66
  + Wilkin Chapman Solicitors
  + Lincolnshire Maternity and Neonatal Programme
  + NAViGO (Mental Health Service provision)
  + Forces Employment
  + SSAFA
  + TILS Service (NHS)
  + Combat Stress.

The work of this group also contributes in us working towards the requirements of the DERS Gold Award to engage with local businesses to support their progress through the DERS scheme.

* NELC front line staff e-learning has been redesigned and is available to use.
* NELC have established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and a member of the NELAFLG sits on this to represent the Armed Forces Community within NELC.
* The webpage for Armed Forces NELC has been recently updated ([Armed forces | NELC (nelincs.gov.uk)](https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/your-council/armed-forces/)) to include more localized support and assistance that is available.

***Armed Forces Major Events Team***

* Dealing with general support enquiries and attendees presenting at The Hive are approximately 2-3 per day, with a total of 700 over this last reporting period
  + 30% of attendees required referrals to professional services
  + 60% of these attendees did not require a professional referral
  + 10% of attendees were seen at The Hive, Knoll House
* Support services offered as follows:
  + **Housing** – direct action with NELC and Lincolnshire House
  + **Mental Health** – Op Courage and Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service
  + **Debt Management** – DWP and SSAFA provide advice at The Hive, Knoll House
  + **Legal Services** – new provider from August 2023
  + **Welfare and pension advice** – RNA, RBL, RAFA, SSAFA, Y&H VAPC, Veteran’s UK (formerly Veterans Gateway)
  + **Veterans in the justice system** – Op Nova caseworkers
  + **Employment opportunities and requests** – some employers actively target veterans through AFMET
* AFMET organized the Armed Forces Weekend, which took place over 16th – 18th June 2023.

***Stakeholder Engagement***

* The NEL Liaison Group has increased frequency of meetings from 2 to 3 per year.
* Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Trust have developed a Veterans Action Group internally, for both clinical and non-clinical roles which feeds into the Liaison Group.
* NAViGO completed research project on Veterans’ Needs. Whilst only a small number of veterans took part in the research compared to our population, the research highlighted that veterans services available need to be advertised differently to ensure engagement.
* NAViGO hosted a Veterans Stakeholder Event and the feedback was shared with the Liaison Group.

***What Next?***

The work of the North East Lincolnshire Armed Forces Liaison Group will continue to move this agenda forward, meeting three times per year.

The Action Plan (2023-2028) attached at the end of this report, details the actions of the Group in supporting local veterans, our support for current armed forces employees and reservists, our role in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant and in commemoration of those who have served and made the ultimate sacrifice.

**ACTION PLAN WILL BE ATTACHED ONCE AGREED**